

# Couple escapes serious injury in Ft. Thomas plane crash

NKU professor, former elected official hospitalized

**WLWT5**

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**FORT THOMAS, Ky. —**

The pilot of a plane that crashed late Saturday said he felt like he was in someone else's hands as the plane went down.

Investigators said a plane was reported down about 9:15 p.m. Saturday across the Ohio River from Lunken Airport.

Officials said two people were aboard the single-engine Cessna plane -- a pilot and his wife. They said both victims were conscious and alert.

They were identified Monday as Gary and Nyoka Johnson. Gary Johnston is a professor at Northern Kentucky University, and Nyoka Johnston has served as a Covington and Kenton County commissioner.

The pair was taken to area hospitals for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries.

River Road was closed for hours as investigators looked into the crash.

Investigators said the plane was trying to make it to the airport when it went down.

Rescuers said it took them a while to get to the wreckage. They had to use chainsaws to get to the remote area.

"It was difficult. We had witnesses say they saw a plane go down but they didn't know the location so we had officers on four-wheelers and just climbing up the hillside," Ft. Thomas police Lt. Richard Whitford said.

Investigators said they weren't sure where the plane had taken off.

The Federal Aviation Administration is handling the investigation.

### **Pilot finds new meaning after crash**

New 5's Laura Borchers spoke with the couple about their near-death experience.

"I all at once had this, kind of a warm feeling, I'm doing what I'm trained to do -- I'm flying the plane, I'm doing everything as it's losing power, going down -- but I had this warm feeling like someone had me in their hands," Gary Johnston said.

Johnston said they were lucky that trees hugged their cockpit just tightly enough that the plane didn't hit the ground.

He said his wife was trapped as gasoline sprayed over them, drenching them in the volatile liquid.

Johnston said he hit the broken fuselage until he could free himself and his wife.

He was able to help rescue crews find them by using his flashlight.

"The emotion behind this is beyond belief. It's hard to describe," Johnston said. "I woke up Sunday morning, saw the sunlight (and it) had a whole new meaning. Don't wait until you hit the canopy of trees at 100 mph before you find out what you're here for. Make use of your life now."